On Head Coverings in Church

Who has ever felt like they were being watched when praying, reading Scripture, or entering the sanctuary of a church? Did you feel many eyes on you, look around, and not see anyone? There is surely a great cloud of witnesses to the believer (cf. Heb. 12:1). God watches us. Departed believers watch us. Angels watch us. Therefore, our worship must decent and orderly (cf. 1 Cor. 14:40), as we give a testimony to witnesses, even when there are none we can see with our physical eyes.

Let us read a passage from 1 Corinthians 11 about order in worship.

1 Cor. 11:1-16 (KJV)
1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.
2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you. 3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. 10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on *her* head because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God.
13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

If you have ever wondered about the rules that men should take their hats off in church, or that men should not have long hair, here it is! A man has short hair, and takes his hat off in church, or while praying or prophesying, to honor his Head, meaning Christ, and to respect the creation order. He does this regardless of earthly people present, because of the great cloud of witnesses, giving a testimony to them of his honor for Christ.

Likewise, women should have long hair, and wear a head covering when praying or prophesying. A woman has long hair and wears a head covering in church, or while praying or prophesying, to honor her head, meaning her father or husband, and to respect the creation order. She does this regardless of earthly people present, because of the great cloud of witnesses, giving a testimony to them of her honor for both Christ and her father or husband.

Church history testifies that the head covering for a woman is more than just her hair. As Paul wrote, if a woman is uncovered, it is like her being shaven bald, but as that would be shameful,

she must wear a head covering. The Greek word for covering in reference to hair is different from the word for covering used through the rest of the passage, indicating Paul was not talking about hair, but a cloth veil. Christians of all denominations maintained the practice of head coverings until the twentieth century. Before it was gone completely, the rule was broken by either a small token covering that did not cover the hair, or a fancy "Sunday crown" that was a vehicle of pride and competition for status. A head covering has always been a simple, plain, opaque cloth to cover the head and hair, other than the face.

A woman's head covering also serves like a shield against the eyes of men and angels, protecting her privacy and modesty, and protecting the eyes of men and angels from her beauty, that they might not be tempted.

"For this cause ought the woman to have power on *her* head because of the angels" (1 Cor. 11:10, KJV). If a woman thinks she cannot be a temptation to even angels, hear of the angels who sinned:

Gen. 6:1-8 (KJV)
1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.
3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. 4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare *children* to them, the same *became* mighty men which *were* of old, men of renown.
5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

2 Pet. 2:4-9 (KJV)
4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) 9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Jude 5-7 (KJV)
5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in

everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. 7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

As these passages show, some of the angels who fell sinned by mixing with human women, which is an especially egregious sin that resulted in imprisonment before judgment day. This is a sin against the creation order. Therefore, it is possible for women to temp angels. The law of love commands us not to cause our fellow believer to stumble and fall, to put them ahead of ourselves, and suffer inconvenience for them. The law of love commands us to honor the creation order. Special punishment shows how seriously God takes the matter. Some more passages about not being a source of temptation for another:

Mat. 18:6-7 (KJV)
6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.
7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

1 Cor. 8:9-13 (KJV)
9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

If it were better for someone to die than cause offense, and it were better to abstain from meat for the rest of one's life than cause offense, surely it is better for a woman to wear a head covering in worship than to cause offense. Even if there is no man present to be offended, an angel might be present and offended! Consider that an angel struck King Herod dead when he was offended:

Acts 12:21-23 (KJV)
21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is* the voice of a god, and not of a man.
23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Consider how unbelievers will remove their hats and cover their hearts for a national anthem. Consider how among unbelievers, traditional Jews and Muslims still practice head coverings for women. If people who claim to follow Christ will not abide by the Lord's command regarding head coverings during worship, it might be more tolerable for those unbelievers in the day of judgment.

From First Corinthians, we see what Paul wrote is truly the commandments of the Lord:

1 Cor. 14:34-40 (KJV)
34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. 36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. 38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.
39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

Not only must men not cover their heads while praying or prophesying, and women must wear a head covering while praying or prophesying, but women must not give speeches in worship services with both men and women present, as women are not permitted to teach men or usurp authority over them.

1 Tim. 2:8-15 (KJV)
8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Seeing what Paul wrote is the commandments of the Lord, hear what the Lord said about keeping his commandments:

Mat. 7:21-27 (KJV)
21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

John 14:23-24 (KJV)
23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

John 15:1-17 (KJV)
1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.
5 I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.
7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.
9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.
11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.
12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. 15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. 16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. 17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

1 John 2:3-6 (KJV)
3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.
6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Rev. 12:17 (KJV)
17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Rev. 14:12 (KJV)
12 Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Saving faith is more than mere mental assent, as even evil spirits believe, and tremble:

Jas. 2:14-26 (KJV)
14 What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those

things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?
26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

A saving faith is more than mental assent to the truth of the gospel, but also trust in God, obedience to his commandments, and faithfulness until death. As in the hymn:

> Trust and obey, for there's no other way
> to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.
> ("Trust and Obey", John H. Sammis, 1887)

May all the Lord's people hear and obey, as "The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19, KJV). Amen.